the issue of high trade margins in the case of intravenous fluids. The feasibility of bringing some of the commonly used intravenous fluids under price control is being examined.

Misappropriation of Rice from FCI

999. SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the last year, a case of misappropriation of more than 5500 metric tonne of rice in Food Corporation of India has come to the notice of the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have enquired into the matter;

(d) if so, the findings thereof; and

(e) the action taken or proposed to be taken against the guilty officials?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Food Corporation of India recently detected a case wherein two transport contractors, appointed for transporting foodgrains namely M/s Gautam Associates, Mohali and M/s Yajen Aier & Co., Pehowa had not delivered 4368 MT and 1543 MT of rice worth Rs. 4.25 crores, lifted by them for transportation ex-Kaithal and Pehowa respectively to Imphal (Manipur).

(c) to (e) On the basis of preliminary investigations the Food Corporation of India has placed under suspension its one District Manager and 6 Assistant Managers. F.I.R. has been lodged against the defaulting contractors for misappropriation of foodgrains. With the approval of the Government, the FCI has referred the case to Central Bureau of Investigation on 14.7.1997 for detailed investigations and retrieval of misappropriated rice.

Illegal Trade on Indo-Bangladesh Border

1000. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the thriving illegal trade in commodities like salt, sugar, rice and cloths in the border areas of Bangladesh;

(b) if so, whether the Government have made any assessment of the illegal border trade;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the measures taken by the Government to check these clandestine operations in the Indo-Bangladesh border areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) Government are aware that some illegal trade in commodities like salt, sugar, rice and clothes take place in the Indo-Bangladesh border areas.

(b) and (c) Although no exact figures on quantum of foodgrains smuggled to Bangladesh are available, the seizures of essential commodities made by the Border Security Force deployed on Indo-Bangladesh border during the last three years are as follows:

Item	1995	1996	1997 (upto 30 June)
Salt (Kg)	1245838	1699625	1126571
Sugar (Kg)	855447	1567774	867472
Rice (Kg)	2000548	783102	99503
Cloth (Worth Rupees)	35129536	30524120	18956963

(d) A number of measures including reduction of gaps between Border Out Posts, intensification and increase in Patrols, erection of Observation Post Towers, use of night vision devices, construction of border roads and fences along sensitive stretches have been taken to check smuggling.

National Commission for Minorities

1001. SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR :
SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR :

Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Commission for Minorities has initiated a comprehensive study to identify the social, economic, educational, cultural and the other problems being faced by the major religious minorities of the country and to suggest measures for their solution;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the details of the panel constituted for the purpose;